

HEADMASTER'S LETTER

19 October 2020



Dear Parent

I'm writing this on a Saturday morning, in School, as I'm on Saturday detention duty - a salutary lesson in terms of time but supportive in approach. The respectful silence of the library is punctuated by the cheery noise of young children's drama classes (Anadin later) which are taking place in the Main Block (Trinity Theatre Company, who hire our rooms) – a reminder that some things, at least, are running as normal. You may have seen the photograph above on our Twitter account - a beautiful rainbow over the 1st XV pitch - a good omen for better times, perhaps?

WE'RE ZOOMED

I'm sure many of us are finding the telecon culture a mixed blessing. Whilst I do miss seeing colleagues from various professional bodies in person, I am certainly not missing driving to Aylesbury or being at the mercy of the railways to attend meetings and conferences. We were able to hold our Year 7 Academic Evening (at which Mr Wallace introduces our 'Ethos of Learning') by Zoom; it was well attended and we received good feedback. I think this is a way forward for many of our events; to hold a shorter, more focussed event on key issues rather than asking parents to come in for a half hour talk on a topic. It often takes as long to find a parking space!

STAFF NEWS

Many congratulations to Mr and Mrs Gallagher, Messrs (and Mesdames) Durning, Fossey and Zair who have become parents.

We're very pleased to welcome Sandie Black who starts this week as our Human Resources Manager, Jen Turney as Administrative Coordinator and Sarah Baker as Resources Centre Assistant. We are also pleased to welcome back Julie Holmes, who retired from teaching but has joined us as Maths Administrator. Our Interim IT Manager, Simon Turner, has now been appointed as IT Operations Manager; once our Head of IT and Digital Strategies is in post later in the term we will have in place a very experienced and technically assured IT Department to take us forward. We are delighted that three OWs have joined us for a year's gap work experience and we also have a new group of invigilators/cover supervisors who have joined our current team.

BALANCE

We're trying hard to maintain the necessary balance between students working hard and their wellbeing - creating the appropriate sense of urgency amongst the boys who have, after all, had several months out of a normal academic routine. (Even teachers in the vanguard of digital provision cannot quite mirror the breadth of the classroom experience when teaching remotely.) We are aiming to timetable testing to avoid overload. Mr Wallace and I are giving a series of assemblies with a message around the need to study and also the need to look after themselves.

PARSON'S KNOWS!

Priests who found their congregation '*negligent to come to Holy Communion*' used to read an exhortation which included the following '*Ye know how grievous a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down*'. I should probably read this out in assembly. Some departments are, I know, frustrated that the very boys (*otherwise hindered by worldly business!*) who need extra support at the moment are not the ones taking advantage of it. Your support would be appreciated. Catching up is a key issue for some.

ARKWRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP

Many congratulations to Matthew Duxbury, Year 12, who has been awarded an Arkwright Engineering Scholarship. This is particularly impressive as there has been a shortage of sponsors, therefore, awards, this year. My thanks to the DT Department for their encouragement of our young engineers.

THANK YOU

I should like to thank the whole school community for all that has been achieved this half term. I am so proud of how boys and staff have embraced the difficulties that we have, in all walks of life, had to face. I have been delighted to see lessons, covered by supervisors, where boys bedecked with earphones are taking part in a lesson a self-isolating teacher is delivering from home; the fact that we have maintained student attendance in the mid 90 %s; the sterling efforts of a 'people' community to embrace social distancing (it really does not come naturally to young people), mask-wearing and sanitising diligence; the commitment of staff despite IT problems; the maintenance of the true RGS ethos without the assemblies and corporate events to nourish it all testament to a very solid base being able to adapt to challenges. These will undoubtedly continue after half term, so it is very important that boys and staff get a good break.

A reminder that Thursday is a training day for staff and a 'study at home' day for students. Boys must log onto their form Teams at 0845 for registration for a brief 'form time' and will have been set self-study work by their teachers.

I wish you all a safe half term and shall look forward to the rest of the term ahead.

Philip Wayne